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For your information

TO STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS OF FLORIDA, GEORGIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, NORTH CAROLINA, VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, DELAWARE, PENNSYLVANIA, NEW JERSEY, NEW YORK, CONNECTICUT, TENNESSE, AND OHIO

Subject: Atlantic Coast Migratory Movement

The following is a report by O. W. Nealy on the present situation regarding work and housing for migrants in Florida.

PRESENT FLORIDA MIGRANT SITUATION

"This report is written as the result of a recent trip and survey through the Everglades of Florida, and the lower east coast section, since the hurricane.

The 1947 migration season is over in the Northern States, and workers are beginning to head South. Many who went North did not make a decent living; others did. Just as the Florida season was late because of floods and freezes, the States farther North experienced the same lateness in crop production and harvesting.

Many migrants anticipated returning to Florida to find good employment, but just a few days before the regular season was to start, Florida received two severe storms, only about a week or 10 days apart.

Observations:

Many farms between West Palm Beach and Belle Glade are totally under water, and the same situation prevails between Belle Glade and Pahokee, Belle Glade and South Bay, and south towards Fort Lauderdale. Many in these areas, I think, will not be able to make a crop this fall. Army engineers and regular drainage outfits are still busy pumping water from flood land.

At the time of the hurricanes, fewer acres were planted than in previous years, at the same date. Many seedbeds already set out were destroyed. Many are now being rapidly reset. As fast as the lands are drained and put into readiness for cultivation, planting is being done. In normal years, at this same time, there would be around 20,000 to 30,000 acres of vegetables planted, as compared with 5,000 to 6,000 to date.

Migratory camps:

From the rehabilitation days up to October 16, 1947, the Federal Government operated eight permanent domestic migratory camps for white and Negro agricultural workers. These camps are now leased to the Florida Vegetable



Committee, which in turn has subleased them to the various housing authorities in the towns where the camps are located, to be operated by the respective city housing authorities.

Through the years past, migrants have become accustomed to Government arrangements. Since the camps were taken over by local housing authorities, there has arisen much unrest. First, rents have been increased, in some cases doubled. With only a fair season up the coast this summer, migrants returned South needing good employment. They found the hurricane had disrupted the anticipated farming season this fall, and in addition to that, the leasing and subleasing of the camps had increased living costs at a time when they were without money to subsist on until crops are ready. Many now are not financially able to maintain themselves in the camps or in their homes any longer. Many are moving out into private quarters, largely against their will. Others are moving to other sections of Florida, and still others are returning to their original homes seeking employment, which I doubt they will find. These original home sites include the States of Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina, principally.

#### Present Housing Authorities:

In each camp I had conferences with the executive directors in charge, and it is their desire to operate on the same principles that the camp was formerly operated under. This may be true, but the rents are increased at a time when no work is available. Camp authorities promise to give the same assistance, as nearly as possible, that was formerly given by the Federal Government. Whether or not this is done remains to be seen.

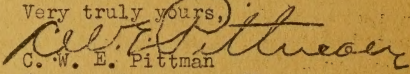
At present in the Okeechobee Camp, there are, as of October 27, 1,200 migrants, with a school enrollment of 376, and a staff of 16 teachers. The Everglades Camp authorities did not know the camp population, but the school showed approximately 200 pupils with six teachers. Sand-Cut Camp is totally under water, and I doubt if it can be used the rest of this season for school or living. Pompano Camp is in fairly good shape. Part of the school building was blown down. Homestead Camp is in fairly good shape, but is closed at present. It will be available for migrants when they arrive in the area. The South Dade and Redland Camps are not operated by the City Housing Authority, but are operated under the Dade County Farmers Association.

#### Conclusion:

From my contacts with county agents, growers, executive directors of camps, migrants, and all other interested persons, I feel that this fall and coming spring will be one of the worst in history for Florida's vegetable growers and migrants. There is hardly any possibility at all for either grower or migrant to make a worth-while living at the present cost of living. I further feel that relief from some source should be administered to curb hunger and to prevent people from living outdoors."

The above report was written under a November 1 date line. It pictures conditions prevailing during the last 10 days of October, some 6 weeks after the first hurricane. The disruption of fall and early winter employment is very great. Migrants now in Northern States should be offered employment through November, if possible.

Very truly yours,

  
C. W. E. Pittman

Southeastern Area Director  
Recruitment and Placement Division  
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